



Ironhorse Desert News

Operation Iraqi Freedom



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"Steadfast & Loyal"

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Reporters from CNN, FOX, ABC, NBC and other media outlets take notes during a press conference on August 7 at FOB Ironhorse in Tikrit, Iraq.



Above: Cameras roll as MG Odierno makes an opening statement during a press conference.

Left: MG Raymond Odierno, commander of the 4th ID, spoke with the media about Task Force Ironhorse operations.

Story and photos by MSG Debra Bingham

TIKRIT, Iraq -- Media representatives from a dozen organizations gathered in Tikrit, Iraq, on August 7 for a press conference with MG Raymond Odierno, commander of the 4th Infantry Division. The conference took place in the division headquarters on Forward Operating Base Ironhorse in a former palace belonging to Saddam Hussein.

Reporters wanted to know how close coalition soldiers are to finding Saddam Hussein.

"I don't know if we're getting closer or not, but there are signs that we're taking down a lot of people who were close to him," Odierno said.

Odierno described the pressure from daily raids conducted by U.S. forces as causing the former dictator to move often and disguise his appearance.

"He is clearly moving three or four times every single day. From some of the raids we've done there are indications that somebody has been moving through there—somebody important," Odierno said.

Iraqi citizens continue to provide valuable intelligence tips that have led to the recent capture of several key Saddam loyalists. According to Odierno, more and more locals are coming forward with information because they know that soldiers will act on it.

"Everyday we get four or five reports that he could be anywhere from Kirkuk to Ba'Qubah to Tikrit," Odierno said.

Task Force Ironhorse continues to focus on capturing mid-level loyalists and locating weapons caches, according to the commander. He said the raids have been successful and have eroded Saddam's circle of supporters.

"He's on the run. He must move often because his support structure has been affected," Odierno said. "We've been picking up a lot of his internal network; this necessitates it even more that he must move."

Odierno also addressed reports that a "bounty" being offered on U.S. soldiers had been raised from \$250. The general described the increase as a sign that fewer people are willing to work against coalition forces and as an indication of loyalist desperation.

"The word is the price has quadrupled for doing attacks on U.S. forces. We believe now that's gone to about \$1,000 and \$5,000—something in that area," he said.

As coalition forces continue to put the squeeze on Saddam, reporters asked what happens when he's found. Odierno said U.S. forces would like to take Saddam alive, but predicted that his bodyguards would probably put up a firefight.

"It would be helpful to put him in front of the Iraqi people and let them see that we have captured him," Odierno said.

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Story and photo by SSG Craig Pickett

TIKRIT, Iraq – The peaceful night is shattered by a thunderous boom. Soldiers throughout Forward Operating Base Ironhorse become tense until they find out it was a friendly boom delivered by Mortar Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-22 Infantry Battalion, 4th Infantry Division.

The blast is a good sound for the mortar men from Fort Hood, Texas. For the past three months, they have been patrolling, conducting check points, and manning a detention facility. Now they are finally doing what they love; dropping a 38-pound mortar round down a long metal cylinder and feeling the shockwave as it exits the tube.

"I love my job," said PFC Brian Dennis, a mortar man from Fresno, Calif. "It's the excitement of dropping the round."

The round of choice is a 120 millimeter shell, comprised of composition B explosive. Horseshoe-shaped cheese charges are used to propel the round from the tube. Depending on the distance to the target and the hang time desired, one to four charges are used.

A lot of punch is packed into one charge. On a recent fire mission, that one charge was enough to send the conical killer 3,800 meters and kept it in the air for 36.6 seconds.

Not only is the one charge responsible for the loud blast that echoes through camp, it even shakes the very building that houses the mortar platoon.

"Even with one charge, pieces of the house are falling off," said SGT Ricky Hines, from Dallas, Texas, who works in the fire direction center.

Lately, fire missions occur nightly and the booms can be heard throughout the night. Mortars platoon leader, 1LT Colin Crow, explained they fire for two reasons. One is for a show of force "just to remind people we can do it," he said.

Crow, from Shreveport, La., also said they fire the mortars to register them. "There are so many factors that affect them that it helps when you are in a fixed position. It is more accurate when you are not going to move."

Their accuracy can be pinpoint thanks to the fire direction center. Hines and his crew man a M113 personnel carrier, and they are the ones responsible for inputting the data provided from the forward observers and calling it out to the gun crews.



SPC Tyler Gross of Mortar Platoon carries a 38-pound, 120 millimeter mortar round to the gun tube in preparation for the night's fire mission.

"We can hit metal to metal," said Hines, commenting on their accuracy.

Hines explained the FOs call in a ten-digit grid coordinate, and his crew will work up the data and give it to the guns. They will fire one round and the FOs will observe it and call back with adjustments.

"We'll input it in the computer and send it out to the guns to fire for affect," said Hines.

The effect can be deadly for anyone standing inside the 70-meter killing radius. The mortar can reach out and touch an enemy target over 7,000 meters away or as close as 166 meters.

Crow said these missions are great for his soldiers. "Not only is this practice, but it is great for morale," he said.

Not only do the soldiers love sending high explosives into the sky, they are letting all the subversive groups within earshot know, they have the firepower to reach them.

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Story by CPL Vernon O'Donnell

TIKRIT, Iraq – With much of the world's attention focused on the hunt for Saddam Hussein and his remaining loyalist elements, the daunting tasks of rebuilding remain from the public eye.

Years of neglect and being damaged or weakened in the war have left Iraq's infrastructure in a poor state. Task Force Ironhorse and the 4th Infantry Division are working on a variety of missions aimed at helping the Iraqi people improve living conditions and become self-sufficient. Establishing a viable communications system is crucial to keeping Iraqis informed. Taskforce Ironhorse soldiers are helping Iraqis reestablish a news system.

"This is so important because building a baseline for using information responsibly is necessary for any media service," said MAJ Joe Cox, the information operations officer for TF Ironhorse. "Also, all media is focused on Baghdad, so the local people needed an outlet to talk about what is happening in their part of the country."

The process began in May when the 362nd Psychological Operations Battalion helped locals in Ba'qubah establish an independent news media. From that, work began on launching a free media network within the Task Force's three provinces: Salah Ad'din, Diyala, and At Tamin.

"It was a great idea and showed great initiative," said Cox. "From that we saw a requirement that there be a standard across our area of operations."

Additionally, in May, the civilian run Iraqi Media Network began work on rebuilding a national system of newspapers, radio, and television stations that also supply regional coverage. The two missions have come together so that the radio and television networks coordinated by TF Ironhorse fall under the IMN, and thus funded by the Iraqi Ministry of Finance, while the newspapers remain autonomous news sources.

The process of rebuilding started with meetings of all the provincial media directors and task force representatives. Assessments were made determining the level readiness of the individual news sources. Most of the equipment was in sufficient condition to function quickly and with a miniscule amount of work. Some areas were heavily damaged during bombing raids by the U.S. Air Force, though.

"Here in Tikrit, the infrastructure was basically destroyed and that means that the entire Salah Ad'din province is lacking a regional outlet," said Cox. "There was just nothing left from the bombing and looting. No equipment, wires, nothing left to use at all."

The lack of proper technological supplies has delayed the process, but steps forward have been made. An AM radio station has recently gone on the air, and a regional newspaper has been developed with plans to distribute 10,000 copies a week.

"Eventually the paper will be more orderly and consistent so that people will develop a familiarity with the paper," said Staff Sgt. Craig Pickett, the technical adviser for the regional papers. "Also we will be getting them digital cameras so that they can use more photos and bring more life to the paper."

Supplies will be paid for by the U.S. Army but will be turned over to the Iraqis for complete control. The intent is to assist the Iraqis and at the same time prepare them to become completely independent when Coalition soldiers leave Iraq.

According to Cox, the process of helping the local Iraqi media become self-governing can be tiresome and frustrating, but the majority of the local citizens have been helpful. The hard work of many young Iraqi students and other citizens are moving the project along to its goal date of being completed by the beginning of November.

"There are Iraqis who want to take charge and really make it work," said Cox. "The challenge is changing the mindset – the lack of knowledge for capitalism and the previous lack of journalistic integrity have caused some setbacks. But I am confident that the proper journalistic qualities and other knowledge will be achieved. Our goals of having the proper local media networks established in the next three months will be accomplished."



Story and photo by SPC Derek Dexter

KHANAQIN, Iraq – With the Iranian border only 100 yards away, the Iraqi national anthem played loudly in tribute to a graduating class of Iraqi border guardsmen. The ceremony marked the end of a one-week training program. Training the border guards was a joint project between coalition and Iraqi forces. Soldiers from "Crazy Horse" troop, 1-10 Cavalry, from Fort Hood, Texas, played a key role in

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the training. The cavalry soldiers were up to the task of playing "drill sergeants" for the Iraqis.

"I think they (the cavalry soldiers) were excited," said CPT Eric Jamison, commander of C troop. "It was the opportunity to do something a bit different."

The guardsmen began the day with physical training. After what Jamison called a "rigorous" workout, they divided the rest of the day between lectures in the classroom and hands-on training.

The first class the guardsmen attended covered a code of police ethics aimed at instilling a sense of pride in the students. Other classes focused on discipline and proper conduct while in uniform.

Part of the hands-on training involved hand-to-hand combat and operating tactical weapons. Jamison said each guardsman learned how to fire the AK-47, the issued weapon for the border guard patrols. They also received instruction on using the appropriate level of force if confronted.

The Iraqis also spent part of the day doing drill and ceremony techniques. The sessions did more than teach the guards how to march -- it helped instill a sense of camaraderie and pride.

The application process began about six weeks ago, with over 800 people submitting resumes. After an initial screening process, the aspirants were selected and began training.

Thanks to the combined efforts of the Iraqi and coalition forces, the ranks of the border guardsmen are growing. "To date, we are now just a little shy of 200 (guardsmen)," said Jamison. "Hopefully, we'll have over 400 within the next month."

The soldiers of Crazy Horse troop are proud of the role they play helping rebuild Iraq.

"As cavalrymen," said Jamison, "we pride ourselves in our ability to adapt to any mission and to do anything that is asked of us."



Iraqi graduates stand at "parade rest" as they await their certificates from the border guard training program.



Story by MSG Debra Bingham

TIKRIT, Iraq -- Brigade and battalion commanders from Task Force Ironhorse met with members of the 4th ID's Ivy League on August 6. The Ivy League is an organization for 4ID spouses. The meeting brought together the two geographically separated groups via video teleconference, or VTC. The VTC gave the participants a chance to hear and see each other as they discussed the division's mission and the status of its soldiers.

At Forward Operating Base Ironhorse, 4th ID commander, MG Raymond Odierno, and about a dozen leaders gathered around a small monitor displaying Ivy League members in the conference room at Fort Hood. Odierno gave a briefing outlining the units encompassing the task force and their operational areas. He also spoke with the members about recent operations and their impact on capturing former regime loyalists and major weapons caches. He also talked about the role soldiers are playing in helping Iraqis rebuild their country. The general then outlined initiatives underway to improve living conditions and quality of life for deployed soldiers.

Besides giving Ivy League members valuable information that they can share with family members, the VTC also gave the participants a chance to see their spouses for the first time in months. The faces of normally stern-faced commanders quickly melted into blushing smiles as their spouses came on screen to say hello and pass a brief message of endearment.

The VTC was also a test for future use by soldiers and family members. Division leaders hope to give deployed soldiers an opportunity to use the system to link with their own loved ones. Technicians are currently working on starting a VTC connection to the Family Support Center at Fort Hood and hope to have the system operational in time for the holidays.

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Story and photos by MSG Dave Johnson

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, TIKRIT, Iraq – The 704th Forward Support Battalion out of Fort Hood, Texas, has its work cut out for it. The battalion supports 53 separate customer units spread throughout the Tikrit area for the 4th Infantry Division.

The FSB's four companies provide maintenance support, medical care, transporters and serve as quartermaster for fuel and supplies.

The Headquarters, Headquarters Detachment weaves the mosaic of support into a total team effort.

Whether it's for life support, comfort items or work, keeping the power on is a top priority. Maintenance of the equipment soldiers need is paramount in a desert environment. The generator mechanics have been inundated. Much of the power that keeps the 4th ID operating is generator-powered.

"We've been busy since we got here," said PFC Marcela Godoy," a generator mechanic with 704th's maintenance support team at FOB Ironhorse. "We're the direct support there," said shop foreman SGT Gerard Williams. "Anything unit-level mechanics can't fix, we'll help out and make sure it gets repaired. From wheeled vehicles to generators."

Equipment isn't the only thing in need of periodic maintenance. Soldiers require care, too. Echo Company provides that medical support.

"We have a combat stress team, a dentist, ophthalmologist and a great sports injury doc who specializes in orthopedic-type injuries," said MAJ Tom Detrick, support operations officer. "The medical soldiers see and treat more than 60 patients a day."

The 704th has reached out to the communities, as well. According to 2LT Matthew N. Rivers, combat health support officer, a young Iraqi girl was burned while playing with ordnance in the nearby village.

"The girl's father ran to the gate and yelled 'help' to our security guards. They contacted our medics, and we were able to treat the girl," said SFC Vicki L. O'Neal, medical operations non-commissioned officer.

"She had third-degree burns, but we got her excellent treatment, and she's recovering well," added Rivers.

According to Detrick, the 704th is working with the Division Surgeon's office to organize an immunization team to work in the communities the 22nd of each month.



SPC Jennifer McCurley pumps fuel into a Humvee at the fuel point at FOB Speicher.



PFC Marcela Godoy (left) and SPC James Cowell strap down spare tires.

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FUEL, FROM PAGE 5

"We're leaving our stamp all over," added O'Neal.

Sustaining equipment is a lot of work, and spare parts are required. Movement is required to get the much-needed supplies, repair parts and all-important mail to the troops. That's where the transporters from B Company thrive.

According to CPT John Staley, the S3 Operations Officer, they have the large vehicles that move a military van of mail every day and transport water, fuel, food and medical supplies.

"When we're moving, we supply a lot," said Staley.

"We received over fifty-four hundred repair parts in five days," said Detrick. "That's amazing. We're really needed them."

Detrick and O'Neal, both Desert Storm veterans, reflected on the challenges of supply in Iraq.

"Long-term sustainability wasn't a problem during Desert Storm," said Detrick. "The convoys could run at night in Kuwait and Saudi, but not here. There are a lot more security issues in Iraq, and that slows down convoys and restricts movement."

"Medical supplies and water came in quickly," said O'Neal. "The distances weren't as long to get to us, either."

O'Neal worked in a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital during Desert Storm.

For the resources to get into the hands of soldiers so they can perform their missions, it takes fuel. The fuel point is always busy filling the tanks of Task Force Ironhorse vehicles.

"We run 24-7," said SGT Bruce Smith, a petroleum supply NCO.

"The FSB sends fuel to the Palace (FOB Ironhorse) and over to the refueling point. We've got 42, five-thousand gallon tankers, and we utilize them."

"I like staying busy," said SPC Jennifer McCurley, a petroleum supply specialist. "It's been rough here. I miss my son, but I'm staying in the Army for a career."

Alpha Company does a lot more than supply fuel for its 53 units. New uniforms are on the way and should arrive by mid-August.

"We're repairing desert camouflage uniforms and setting up a Supply Support Activity," said O'Neal.

The 704th has been and continues to be the buttress that holds up and sustains the support mechanism for the soldiers in its AO.



SGT Bruce Smith of the 704th FSB prepares to do a major refueling job at FOB Speicher.

Religious Services at FOB Ironhorse

Sunday:

9:30 a.m.-- Protestant

11:00 a.m.-- Gospel

Noon-- LDS

1:00-- Catholic

Wednesday:

6:30 p.m.-- Prayer & Praise

7:00 p.m.-- Bible Study

Friday:

7:30 p.m.-- Jewish

12:25 p.m.-- Muslim

BAZAAR OPENS AT MWR BUILDING

Items available for purchase include Arabian rugs and various souvenirs.

Combat Stress Team

Now available at FOB Ironhorse. Located at the Aid Station. Counseling and decompression opportunities are available.

Call 534-0161

Task Force News

Story by SPC Derek Dexter; photos by Combat Camera

FORWARD OPERATING BASE IRONHORSE, Tikrit, Iraq – Most soldiers who deployed with the 4th Infantry Division have been in country for nearly four months. For many soldiers, meals have come in the familiar MRE pouch or in T-ration form. Although the meals sustain, they don't always please the palate or offer a lot of variety. That changed with the arrival of KBR.

KBR is Kellogg, Brown & Root, a contracted food service, that has begun operations on several sites across the Task Force Ironhorse area of operations. Many soldiers remember the food service's operation at Camp New Jersey, Kuwait. On August 6, KBR opened a facility on FOB Ironhorse in Tikrit, providing soldiers with freshly cooked meals, cold drinks and a spacious air-conditioned site to enjoy their meals.

"I'm impressed with KBR and how fast they built the chow hall," said SPC Michael Osorio of the 502nd Engineer Company out of Hanau, Germany.

Approximately 200 soldiers lined up early to enjoy their first "home cooked" meal in months. LTC Rick Starkey, commander of the 1/44 Air Defense Artillery, presided over the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the facility. He thanked the leading members of the KB&R team and then cut the red, white and blue ribbon.

Inside the large white building, people scurried around making final preparations for the first meal of steak, lobster tail, or chicken and shrimp.

"I like the seafood they serve around here," said PFC Barry Batey from the 502nd. "No more KP, either," he added.

Command Sergeants Major Chuck Fuss, division command sergeant major and Lloyd Coley, the 1-44 ADA command sergeant major, and Starkey, manned the serving line. Along with the main course, diners enjoyed a selection of mashed potatoes, green beans and a salad bar with fresh greens and potato salad. Rows of refrigerators were fully stocked with soda, milk and juice. Tables were filled with fresh bread, desserts and fruit.

"I'm impressed with the cold drinks here," said PFC Luis Martinez of the 502nd.

Soldiers enjoyed the food and the extra touches they had not enjoyed in a long time like ice for their drinks and plastic plates. Piles of fruit, including kiwi and carved watermelons, were artfully displayed. Fruit was sliced up and shaped into the 4th ID's familiar ivy leaf pattern. Music was provided courtesy of the 4th ID Band's Brass Quartet.

Although it isn't "Mom's home cooking," it certainly isn't an MRE and for most soldiers that is a big improvement.

**** Dining Facility Hours: Breakfast: 5:30 – 8:00 a.m.; lunch: 11:30 – 1:00 and dinner: 5:30 – 10:30 p.m.****



Photo by SGT Albert Eaddy

LTC Rick Starkey and CSM Lloyd Coley cut the ribbon that opened FOB Ironhorse's new dining facility on August 6.



Photo by SGT Albert Eaddy

CSMs Chuck Fuss and Lloyd Coley serve soldiers during opening night at the new dining facility on FOB Ironhorse.

News Briefs

Crawford, Texas President Bush says Iraq is making steady progress establishing its economy, basic services and a democratic system and that should improve security in this country and the Middle East.

Liberia: Days before President Charles Taylor is to step down, his spokesman warned Saturday of bloodshed to follow and said he feared what Taylor's demoralized fighters would do. "All hell might just break loose," he declared.

Calif: Hundreds of potential candidates faced a decision Saturday on whether to pony up \$3,500 and jump into the campaign to succeed Gov. Gray Davis, who faces a recall vote on Oct. 7. p — but one unlikely to be accepted in its present form, accusers and their lawyers said. Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger told a roaring audience on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno Wednesday that he'll run for governor, ending months of suspense and injecting instant drama into California's recall election.

From USA Today: Cases of West Nile virus tripled in the past week and are well ahead of last year's pace, federal health officials said Thursday. Armed with the most recent data, they warned that the worst might be ahead.

JERUSALEM - Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat reacted angrily Saturday to an Israeli raid in the West Bank that killed three Palestinians. Two of those killed in the raid were members of the Islamic militant group Hamas. An Israeli soldier also was killed.

Washington: Former Vermont governor Howard Dean, riding a blitz of media publicity and talk show buzz, has surged into the top tier of 2004 Democratic presidential candidates, a USA/TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll shows.

Alabama: The Army on Saturday fired up its first chemical weapons incinerator near a residential area and destroyed a Cold War-era rocket loaded with enough sarin to wipe out a city.

Bardstown, Ky -Fire engulfed a whiskey warehouse at a Jim Beam facility on August 4th. The fire sent flames more than 100 feet in the air. The flaming wooden structure collapsed into a pile of debris and continued burning, two hours after the fire was reported. There were no reports of injuries.

SPORTS ZONE

LACROSSE — The National Lacrosse League's board of governors will finalize the 12-team league's structure for next season at a meeting next week in Las Vegas. Albany has relocated to San Jose. Columbus may relocate to Minn.

RACING-- NASCAR's king of the road, Jeff Gordon, will start Sunday's Watkins Glen race from the pole position. Series points leader Matt Kenseth qualified seventh. Boris Said, Ron Fellows, Scott Pruett, Johnny Miller, P.J. Jones and Paul Menard also made the field of 43.

GOLF - Davis Love III tied a PGA Tour record with three eagles Friday and doubled his lead after two rounds of The International.

NBA -- Darko Milicic, the #2 pick in the NBA draft said Thursday he is "99 percent certain" he will sign with the Pistons despite last month's suit in New York by his team against his agent.

PRO FOOTBALL - The Cleveland Browns have a quarterback controversy. Journeyman Kelly Holcomb is attempting to displace Tim Couch, the #1 overall pick in the 1999 draft when the Browns reentered the NFL. Coach Butch Davis stated he would decide on his starting QB by the third preseason game.

BASEBALL -- The following are division leaders and teams in second place. American League in the East: New York, Boston; Central Division is led by Chicago, followed by Kansas City; in the West Seattle is ahead of Oakland. In the National League: Atlanta leads the East, followed by Philadelphia; in the Central, Houston leads the Chicago Cubs, and out west, San Francisco leads Arizona.

NHL Pavol Demitra will stay with St. Louis after the team agreed Thursday to re-sign him to the one-year \$6.5 million salary.